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Education, Values and Society by **John Raven**

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**EDUCATION, VALUES
AND SOCIETY:**

The Objectives of Education and the
Nature and Development
of Competence

JOHN RAVEN

Originally published by H.K Lewis & Co., London, 1977

FROM REVIEWS

The dust sheet of the book records that its first aim is to provide "the most thorough evaluation of our educational system that has ever been attempted". For once, this is not just P.R. The dust sheet understates; it is not only the most thorough examination, it is also the most searching. The results are a swingeing indictment of present practice; but Raven also concludes that "there is ample theory and experience available as a basis on which to build a wider range of experimental programmes designed to foster the competencies believed to be the most important..."

...a massive tome, packed with information and ideas. Reviewing it is a bit like summarising Proust in 30 seconds. But it is undoubtedly the one book, apart from the Bible and Shakespeare, that anyone connected with education ought to take with them on a desert island.

Raven concludes by proposing a series of possible innovations in education and outlining appropriate assessment procedures. He argues that the most badly needed change is in the examination system; syllabuses and exams should concentrate on competence rather than content. He argues that teachers must adopt new roles, using their professional *educational* (rather than subject) expertise...

He asserts that learning must become experience based, that pupils must be helped to clarify their values and objectives in education, and that methods of fostering competence must be developed allowing pupils to practice and develop the components of competence through learning experiences ... geared to goals important to them ... Raven goes on to outline how changes could be introduced within specific subjects in the orthodox curriculum. In science for example, pupils may be encouraged to *invent* tests of theories, instead of replicating old ones, to consider side effects of what they are doing, to make real discoveries, not contrived ones.

John Pratt, *Journal of the National Association of Inspectors and Advisers*.

This is a seminal book, not to be missed. Anyone genuinely concerned about education, values or society should get it, read it, and acknowledge that his educational bluff has been called. He will realise that Mr Raven has conducted the most exhaustive studies ever undertaken in these islands of the objectives of education; realise, also, that the author has presented not only numerous researches but the implications of his findings for change in educational policy.

This blockbuster of a volume is all good stuff, readable, challenging and fully documented.

Elizabeth Adams, *Higher Education Review*.

The most important book ever written on education.

Gilbert de Landsheere

FROM THE DUST JACKET

This book has two main objectives which, because they are so interrelated, are pursued in an epicyclic rather than a linear fashion.

The first objective is to provide the most thorough evaluation of our educational system that has ever been attempted. In pursuit of this objective, Mr Raven presents data which enables him to clarify the goals of education and assess the adequacy with which they are being attained. He is not content to let the matter rest with studies of pupils who are still in the school system, but traces the consequences of different types of education for the individuals concerned and the society in which they live.

The second, related, objective is to advance understanding of the psychological nature of the competencies to be fostered in education, the way in which they are to be fostered, and the way in which their attainment is to be evaluated.

Particular attention is paid to the so-called "non-cognitive" or "character development" goals of education. These goals lie at the heart of most "modern" developments in education (like project work and pupil centred learning) and they were at the fore-front of the minds of the great educationalists of the past. Yet they have frequently proved to be serious stumbling blocks for the parents, teachers, educationalists, examiners, evaluators and researchers who have taken them up.

The data base for the book is impeccable. Over 35,000 people have been involved in the studies carried out by Mr Raven and his colleagues. These studies have included surveys of teachers', pupils', parents', and expupils' perceptions of the goals of education and the problems which prevent the educational system achieving its objectives more effectively. Surveys of children's and adults' perceptions of the institutional structures of society (family, work place, and social and political structures)

and their own role in relation to those structures, surveys of general population attitudes and motivational dispositions and the part played by education in fostering these qualities, surveys of the attitudes of businessmen, employees, and employers, and action-research programmes, carried out with teachers, pupils, and businessmen, in order to help members of each of these groups to clarify their life-goals and values and thereafter pursue them more effectively.

But research data is not the only source which is drawn on as a basis for the insights presented in the book. Selected aspects of the relevant literature are also reviewed and understandings which have emerged from Mr Raven's participation in two educational policy committees, his work with a team of teachers and headmasters involved in curriculum development, and his seminars with experienced community development officers and educationalists, are all shared with the reader.

This book will not only be of interest to educational researchers, evaluators, curriculum-developers, policy-makers, administrators, examiners, teachers, and parents. Because of the wealth of data it contains on the attitudes, perceptions, motivations, and role expectations of the population, it will be of interest to all concerned with civics and citizenship, economic and social development, and Irish studies.

The material on the social and personal benefits of education will be of interest to anyone concerned with the development and utilisation of human resources and human capital. As such, the book will be of value to anyone concerned with staff-development and utilisation in the workplace as well as to economists. The book is of the greatest importance to politicians in both central and local government who are anxious to base educational policy on a firmer foundation.

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